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ABSTRACT

Noting that after-school programs have the potential to reduce not only juvenile crime but also later adult crime, this report examines the needs for after-school programs, the impact of such programs on youth, and the importance of quality programming. Following an executive summary, the report is presented in six chapters. Chapter 1 details statistics showing that unsupervised youth are at risk for becoming crime victims, having an automobile accident, or engaging in other risky behavior during the hours after school. Chapter 2 presents research findings suggesting that after-school programs cut crime and violence; cut smoking, drug use, and sex; and enhance educational and social development because they provide a safe haven and influence youth values and skills. Chapter 3 describes federal grant programs funding after-school programs, noting that the need for after-school programs remains unmet. Chapter 4 discusses the importance of quality and argues for evaluating program design and providing adequate funds to attract, train, and retain good, caring program staff. Chapter 5 argues that investments in after-school programs pay for themselves in lives and in tax dollars. Chapter 6 presents findings indicating that law enforcement professionals believe that providing after-school programs is one of the most effective strategies for reducing youth violence. (Contains 68 endnotes.) (KB)

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America's After-School Choice:

The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime, Or Youth Enrichment and Achievement

A Report From

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

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Sanford A. Newman, President
FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

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Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a national, non profit, bipartisan anti-crime organization made up of more than 1,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, heads of police organizations, experts in what works to prevent youth violence and victims of violence.

Executive Summary

Prime Time for Juvenile Crime, Kids Becoming Victims of Violence, Other Dangers

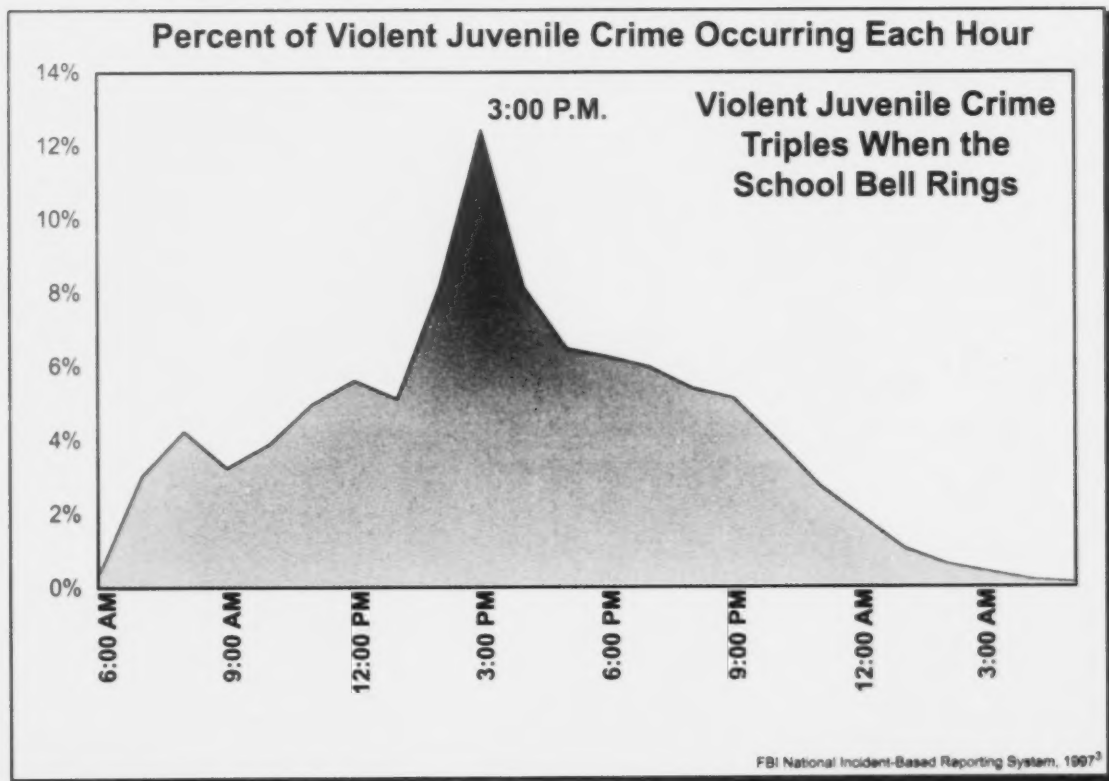
**'The prime time for
violent juvenile crime is
from 3 PM to 6 PM'**

In the hour after the school bell rings, turning millions of children and teens out on the streets with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision, violent juvenile crime suddenly triples and the prime time for juvenile crime begins.

On school days, the prime time for violent juvenile crime is from 3 PM to 6 PM. The crimes that occur then are serious and violent, including murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults.

These are also the hours when kids are most likely to:

- Become victims of violent crime.
- Be in or cause a car crash (for 16- or 17- year-olds), the leading cause of death for teens.



- Be killed by household or other accidents.
- Get hooked on cigarettes.
- Experiment with other dangerous drugs.

The list goes on. Many experts believe, for example, that these are the hours when:

- Teens are most likely to engage in sexual intercourse and when girls are most likely to become pregnant.
- When kids of all ages are most likely to get hooked on video games that too often provide training for violent behavior.

After-School Programs are Proven to Cut Crime, Reduce Risky Behavior

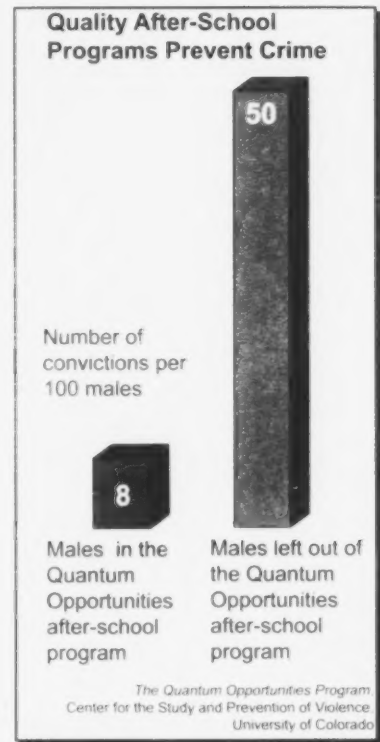
The good news is that after-school programs are now proven to greatly reduce the terrible prospect that children and teens will be caught up in behaviors that can ruin their lives and devastate thousands of innocent families. Good after-school programs really work, keeping kids safe and out of trouble, and helping them learn to get along with others and succeed in school and in life.

Rigorous studies now show after-school programs can:

- Reduce juvenile crime and violence.
- Reduce drug use and addiction.
- Cut other risky behavior like smoking and alcohol abuse.
- Reduce teen sex and teen pregnancies.
- Boost school success and high school graduation.

High school freshmen were randomly selected from welfare households to participate in the Quantum Opportunities after-school enrichment and incentives program for high school students. The outcomes showed:

- Boys left out of the program were six times more likely to be convicted of a crime.
- Boys and girls left out of the program were 50% more likely to have children during the high school years.
- Boys and girls in the program were half as likely to drop out of high school and two and one half times more likely to go on to further education after high school.



**'Eleven million children
and teens are home alone
or hanging out
unsupervised during the
high-risk hours between
school dismissal and
dinnertime.'**

There is more good news too: If we can provide the quality after-school programs and other constructive supports that help youngsters make it through this period without becoming involved in crime, chances are good that they will stay out of serious trouble the rest of their lives. Thus, after-school programs ultimately reduce not only juvenile crime but adult crime as well. Conversely, when a failure to provide after-school programs increases juvenile crime, it also increases adult crime.

Needs Unmet, Opportunities Squandered

Over the last three years, the federal government and a few states have taken important first steps toward meeting families' need for after-school programs.

The Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants program, created with the leadership of Sen. James Jeffords (R-VT) in 1994, is the principal federal source of direct support for after-school programs. Since 1997, each of President Clinton's budgets has called for expanding 21st Century after-school grants. With bipartisan support in Congress and among the public, the program now has \$450 million in funding, estimated to serve 650,000 children and teens.

Despite this progress, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program this year could fund only one out of seven of the grant requests it received from communities.

Some additional families receive help via the Child Care and Development Block Grants, which states use to help low-income working families pay for early childhood and school-age child care, but this program is so under-funded it can serve only one in ten of those eligible.

The result: Over four million children 6 to 12, including more than one in three 10 to 12 year olds, 4 million 13 and 14 year olds and millions of older teens are left without adult supervision after school on a regular basis. In total, the number of children and teens whose need for after-school programs is unmet likely exceeds eleven million.

Our nation's investment in making good after-school programs available to its youth is falling far short of the need.

After-School Programs Save Lives and Tax Dollars.

While millions of kids go unserved because of lack of after-school program funding, studies show that government's failure to invest in these youngsters is actually squandering taxpayer dollars.

Investment in after-school programs returns dividends, not only in lives saved, but in money saved. For instance:

- For every dollar spent on the Quantum Opportunities after-school program, benefits to participants and the public amounted to \$3.04 without even accounting for a six-fold drop in crime by participating boys.
- For each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, experts estimate the country saves between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million.

From Law Enforcement Leaders: A Call for Action

Our nation faces a critical choice. Do we want the after-school hours to continue to be the hours of risk and danger for kids to be hurt, and for kids to slide down a slope of delinquency and crime that threatens the rest of us? Or do we want them to be golden hours of opportunity and positive development for the children who are our future?

Do we want kids who crave excitement to turn to gangs for companionship and to Jerry Springer and games of video violence to learn their conflict resolution skills? Or do we want them to have access to after-school programs that help them develop relationships with caring adults, learn good skills and values and contribute to their communities?

Would we rather pay for after-school programs now or pay for after-school victims later?

America's police chiefs have answered that question. Asked in a poll which one of several strategies will be "most effective" in reducing youth violence, chiefs chose expanding access to after-school programs and good child care programs by a margin of four to one over alternatives such as trying more juveniles as adults and installing metal detectors in schools. By margins of nearly nine to one, they said "expanding after-school and child care programs . . . will greatly reduce youth crime and violence," and that if we fail to expand these investments "we will

**'For each high-risk youth
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saves between \$1.7 and
\$2.3 million'**

pay far more later in crime, welfare and other costs."

Public opinion polls show that eight out of ten Americans agree with law enforcement that after-school programs will "greatly reduce youth crime."

**'Now is the time for our
federal, state and local
policy-makers to commit
themselves to making
sure every community
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families quality after-
school programs'**

The one thousand police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and victims of violence who are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids have called on elected officials to lay out plans to make after-school programs available for all families who need them.

This call has been endorsed by leading national and state law enforcement organizations and the National Organization of Victims Assistance.

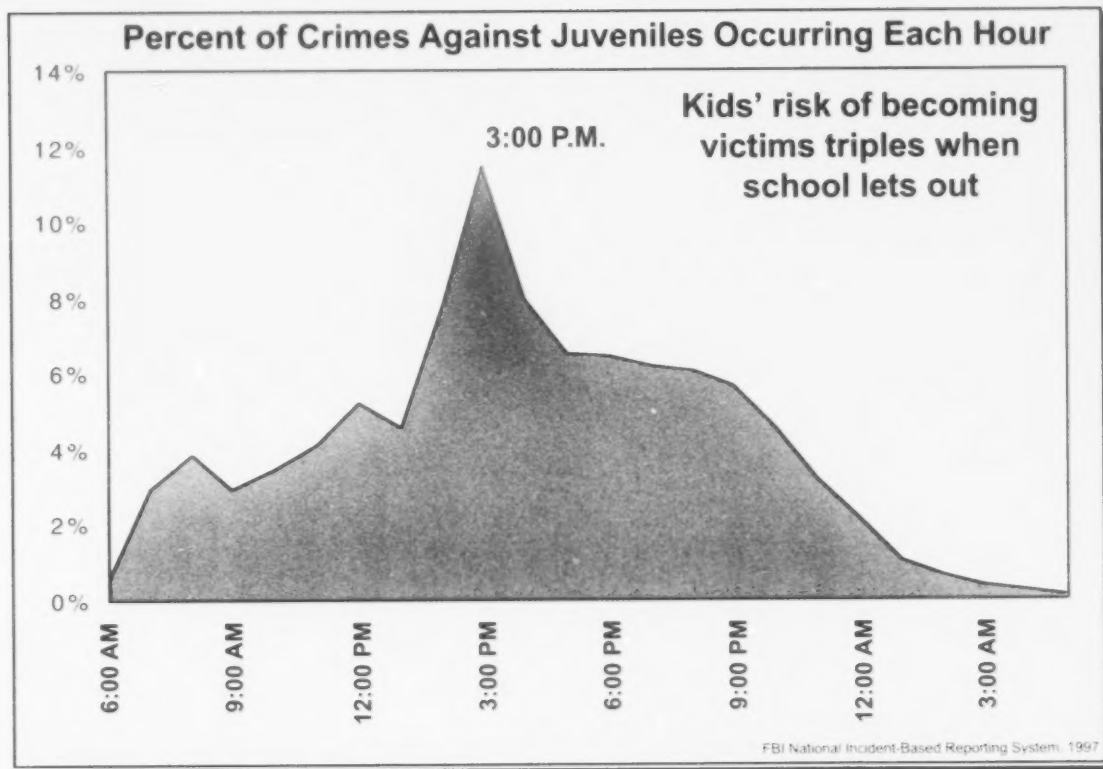
Law enforcement, crime victims and the public all agree that we need to make sure all families have access to after-school programs. They know that failing to provide these programs means:

- Millions of youngsters will fall short of their potential to contribute to our nation.
- Every American family shoulders a needlessly high risk of becoming a victim of crime.

When our nation faced a budget deficit, the President and Congress laid out a five-year plan to eliminate it. Now, our federal budget and the budgets of most states are in surplus. Today, the deficit that most threatens American's safety is a crime-prevention deficit—the tragic shortfall in our investment in programs that help youngsters get the right start.

Now is the time for our federal, state and local policy-makers to commit themselves to making sure every community has the resources it needs to offer all its families quality after-school programs.

Anything less is a dereliction of government's most fundamental duty, protecting the public safety.



1: Prime Time for Juvenile Crime, Kids Becoming Victims, and Other Dangers

In the hour after the school bell rings, turning millions of children and teens out on the streets with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision, violent juvenile crime suddenly triples and the prime time for juvenile crime begins. On school days, the prime time for violent juvenile crime is from 3 PM to 6 PM.¹ The single most likely hour of the school day for a juvenile to commit an assault inflicting serious bodily injury, or an assault with a weapon is between 3 and 4 PM.²

This also is the peak hour for gang-related violence.³

Prime Time for Kids to Become Victims of Violence

The hours after school also are the prime time for youngsters to become victims of violent crime.⁴ When school lets out, violent victimization of children more than triples.⁵ The

What is Violent Crime?

This category of crime, as used in the FBI data, is made up of:

- Murder
- Forcible rape
- Robbery (involving the threat or use of force)
- Assault³

**'Teens are twice as likely
as adults to become
victims of serious violent
crime'**

National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that even that sharp jump as reported to law enforcement agencies probably underestimates the true peak by as much as 44%. According to a Justice Department report: "because crimes in and around school are likely to be reported initially to school officials who may not report them to police, ... law enforcement data may actually underestimate the proportion of crime that occurs in the after-school hours."⁶

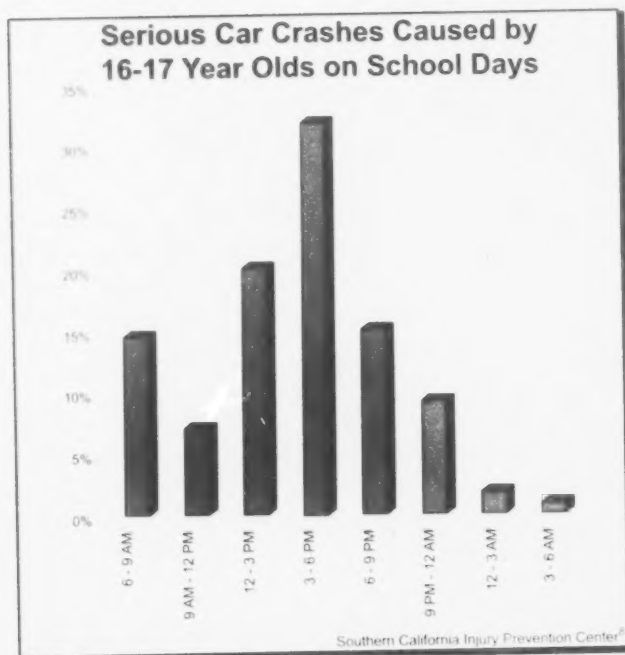
Teens are twice as likely as adults to become victims of serious violent crime, and three times as likely to become victims of simple assault.⁷

Prime Time for Car Crashes, Teen Sex and Drugs

As more children go unsupervised after school and researchers probe more deeply into the effects, it's clear that the risks to kids are manifold.

The prime time for 16 to 17 year olds to be in or cause a car crash on school days is also from 3 to 6 PM.⁸ Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for youths.⁹ At some point in their careers most law enforcement members of Fight Crime:

Invest In Kids have faced the grim task of calling parents to tell them that their child was injured or killed in a crash.



Nearly 4.5 million children 14 and younger are injured in their homes every year, and most unintentional injury-related deaths occur when children are out of school and unsupervised.¹⁰ Non-motor vehicle accidents are the second leading cause of death for children 5 to 14 years of age, and a leading cause of death of older teens.¹¹

The after-school hours also are the most common time for teens to become pregnant¹², and being unsupervised after school puts kids at greater risk of truancy, receiving poor grades, mental depression, and

substance abuse."¹³ In fact, being unsupervised after school doubles the risk that an eighth grader will smoke, drink, or abuse drugs.¹⁴

The more hours youngsters spend on their own, and the earlier the age at which they begin doing so, the greater the risk.¹⁵ For example, sixth graders who had been unsupervised after school frequently during the first through third grades were socially less competent, and had lower grades than a comparison group.¹⁶

2: After-School Programs Prevent Crime, Teach Skills and Values

The good news is that we now know that making after-school programs available from grade school through high school can greatly reduce the terrible prospect that children and teens will be caught up in behaviors that can ruin both their lives and the lives of others.

'Boys randomly assigned to participate in the Quantum Opportunities program were only one-sixth as likely to be convicted of a crime during their high school years as the boys left out of the program'

Quality after-school programs can cut crime and violence immediately and transform the prime time for juvenile crime into golden hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. They also protect kids and adults from becoming victims of crime, and cut teen pregnancy, smoking and drug use. After-school programs help youngsters learn to get along with others, and develop the values and skills they need to become good neighbors and contributing citizens.

Offering kids an alternative to being alone at home or hanging out unsupervised provides a world of benefits for youngsters and for their communities.

Research Shows:

After-School Programs Cut Crime and Violence

◆ The Opportunities Industrialization Centers' Quantum Opportunities Program randomly selected high school freshmen from welfare families in four cities to participate in an intensive after-school enrichment program. The program combined academics, personal development, community service, and monetary incentives to keep at-risk youngsters on a path to high school graduation and adult productivity.

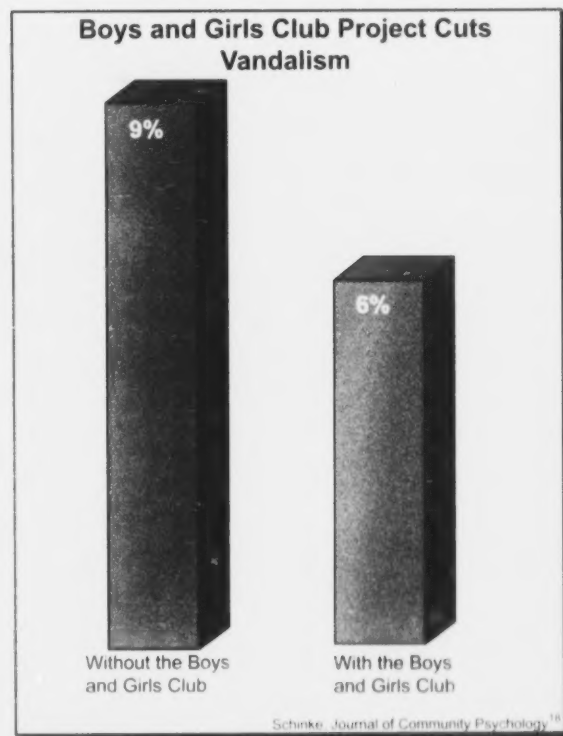
Boys randomly assigned to participate in the Quantum Opportunities program were only one-sixth as likely to be convicted of a crime during their high school years as the boys left out of the program.¹⁷

◆ Researchers compared five housing projects in which new Boys and Girls Clubs were set up to five housing projects without clubs, and to five others with previously established clubs.



Levels of drug use and vandalism were initially equal in the projects without clubs and those in which the new clubs were being established. The projects with existing clubs were in much better shape. By the time the study ended, the projects with new clubs achieved results almost as good as the projects with existing clubs. The projects without clubs had 50% more vandalized housing units and 30% more drug activity than those with new clubs.¹⁸

This Boys and Girls Clubs study replicated the findings of a similar 1956 study of the Red Shield Boys Club in Louisville. Data from before the club was founded in 1944 up until June of 1955 showed that juvenile delinquency dropped 52% in the neighborhood, at a time when delinquency was nearly tripling in one comparison neighborhood, and going up 33% in another similar neighborhood.¹⁹



◆ A study of a 32-month after-school and summer skill-development program in a Canadian public housing project showed that compared to the two prior years, the number of juvenile arrests declined by 75% during the course of the program.²⁰

◆ In the three years after Baltimore's Police Department opened a Police Activities League (PAL) after-school program in one high-crime neighborhood, juvenile crime in the neighborhood dropped nearly 10% and the risk of children and teens becoming crime victims was cut nearly in half. While juvenile victimization rates were coming down for all Baltimore juveniles, the rate in the area served by the PAL program came down nearly three times as fast as it did for the city as a whole.²¹

◆ The Big Brothers/Big Sisters program shows what a difference a well-designed, well-implemented mentoring program can make. A Public/Private Ventures study of that program showed that young applicants randomly assigned to a well-trained, well-supervised mentor were 46% less likely to initiate drug use and 32% less likely to commit an assault than those randomly assigned to the control group.²²

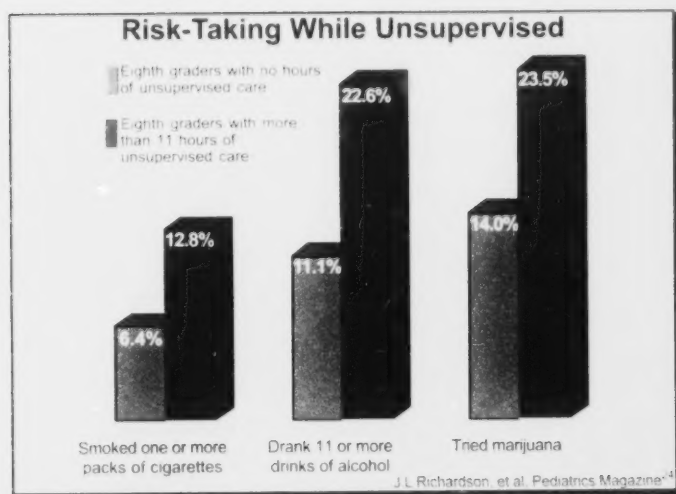
**'The projects without
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**'Being supervised after
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◆ A University of Wisconsin study of 64 after-school programs supported by the Cooperative Extension Service found that teachers reported the programs had helped children become more cooperative and better at handling conflicts. These children also developed greater interest in recreational reading and received better grades. A third of the school principals at these sites reported that vandalism at their schools had decreased as a result of the programs.²³

After-School Programs Cut Smoking, Drug Use, Sex

◆ Being supervised after school cuts in half the risk that middle school students will smoke, drink, or abuse drugs.²⁴



With schools clamping down on smoking by students in and around school buildings, focus groups show that kids who smoke usually do so on their way to school and in the after-school hours.²⁵ Most adults who smoke regularly started during adolescence and most student smokers begin smoking by age 13.²⁶ This means that, when after-school programs cut in half the risk that a middle school student will smoke, they are likely cutting by a similar margin the chance that those children will grow up to be

smokers.

Quality Programs Enhance Educational And Social Development

Out-of-school-time programs can provide important opportunities. Formal after-school programs have helped low-income children develop social skills and learn to get along with their peers,²⁷ attributes which are strongly associated with school achievement, adult success, and reduced risk of delinquency and crime.²⁸ Out-of-school academic enrichment activities can directly improve educational achievement.

◆ The boys and girls randomly assigned to participate in the Quantum Opportunities program were half as likely to drop out of high school and two and one half times more likely to go on to further education after high school.²⁹

◆ Those left out of the program were 50% more likely to have children during their high school years.³⁰

◆ With schools having a hard time balancing their desire to focus classroom hours on academics with their desire to teach values, it is also clear that the after-school hours provide opportunities to implement academic or youth development programs initially developed for in-school or summer use.

The Coca Cola Valued Youth Development Program increases the self-esteem and school success of at-risk middle and high school students by placing them in positions of responsibility as tutors of younger students. Only 1% of the kids in the program dropped out of school, compared to 12% of kids in a control group.³¹ The Voyager summer reading program, developed in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, the Discovery Channel, NASA, and Polaroid, showed gains of 84% for reading comprehension and 35% for word recognition for children in kindergarten through ninth grade.³²

Both the Coca-Cola and Voyager approaches are now being used for use in after-school programs.

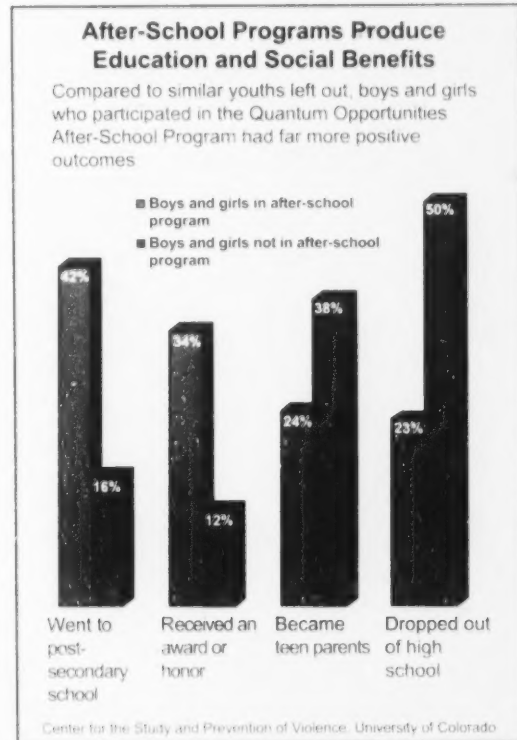
Why After-School Programs Have Such Impact:

The Safe Haven and Control, Values and Skills Effects

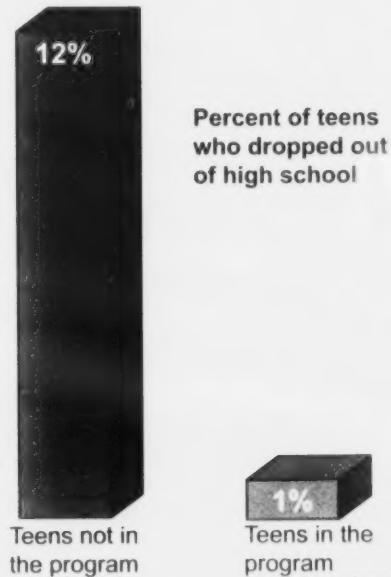
Quality after-school programs reduce juvenile crime immediately and continue to reduce it for many years to come. They do this in two ways:

The Safe Haven and Control Effect. The day an after-school program welcomes its first kid, it begins providing responsible adult supervi-

'Boys and girls in the Quantum Opportunities program were half as likely to drop out of high school and two and one half times more likely to go on to further education after high school.'



Coca Cola Valued Youth Development Program



sion, constructive activities and insulation from deleterious pressure from peers and older children during the high-risk hours. On the day it opens, it also provide a "safe haven" where children are protected from becoming victims of crime.

Children, especially adolescents, crave excitement and activities with their peers. If they cannot find it in programs organized by responsible adults, they become far more likely to find it in gangs. In many neighborhoods, children without after-school safe havens are easy prey; gangs may appear to offer protection, status, a sense of power, and the security of belonging to a group.³³

Research shows that "youngsters generally begin hanging out with gangs at 12 or 13 years of age, join the gang at 13 or 14...and are first arrested at 14."³⁴ The

prime time for gang violence now is in the hours just after school lets out.³⁵

'Children, especially adolescents, crave excitement and activities with their peers. If they cannot find it in programs organized by responsible adults, they become far more likely to find it in gangs'

In Chicago, a leader of one of America's biggest gangs—a criminal who is currently serving a 150-year sentence for murder—was secretly taped explaining his strategy for recruiting kids. The strategy included picnics and parties and money to pay the family bills. Then, he said, "the kids look up," and they find they've "got more now than they ever had before, and they know they wouldn't have anything without" the gang. Is his strategy working? That gang had ten thousand members.

Former Chicago Police Superintendent Matt Rodriguez wrote that "Every day, police officers in Chicago and across the country see gangs and drug dealers competing with parents and with law-abiding citizens for the allegiance of America's youth—bidding to recruit our children for their army, investing in our kids to lead them down a path to disaster.

"The gangs aren't just recruiting in high schools, either. They are recruiting in the junior high and grade schools too. And they are winning new recruits every day—mostly kids who can see little other possibility to win the respect or success that nearly all

young people want and need.

"If we are going to win the fight for the souls of America's children, if we are going to make America safe for our families, then we are going to have to invest in the services that help kids get the right start they need in life,"Rodriquez concluded.³⁶

For most youngsters, the adolescent years are marked by emotional volatility and strong needs for peer approval and respect. The parts of the brain responsible for good judgment and looking ahead to project consequences are still developing. Conflicts are often seen through a lens of starkly one-sided subjectivity, and impulse restraint is often fragile.

For too many teens, but especially for those in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods, this mixture may be stoked by the widespread availability of drugs and alcohol to further cloud immature judgment, and of guns to make bad judgments lethal.³⁷ In one study, 23% of inner-city male high school students said they carried guns occasionally, and 12% said they carried them most of the time.³⁸

If the juvenile violent crime rate for the period from 3 to 8 PM were reduced to school-hour crime levels, one-quarter of all juvenile violent crime committed on school days would be eliminated. (Obviously, investments in weekend and summer programs could also be expected to have a major impact on crime committed on days when school is not in session.)

But this is only the first chapter of a story that lasts a lifetime. Recent research makes clear that the impact of after-school and other quality programs for children and youth far exceeds the Safe Haven and Control Effect.

The Values and Skills Effect. Quality after-school programs provide not only immediate reductions in crime, but also positive experiences which have an enormous and lasting impact on the attitudes, values and skills of participating children.

Quality programs not only help children and teens learn the skills they need to succeed academically, but also teach concern and respect for others, honesty and the importance of working hard and being responsible.

Such programs can also help children develop significant

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relationships with caring adults, which is one of the strongest protections against becoming involved in crime. And programs that include a community service component can help children learn the satisfaction of helping others. These are important "protective factors," making children less likely to engage in crime in the future.

'Being unsupervised after school is substantially more likely to result in behavior problems for low-income children than for those from middle-income families'

Only 20% of children's waking hours are spent in school.³⁹ How they spend the other hours, not surprisingly, plays a major role in their development.

In this respect, as in others, after-school programs may have the biggest impact on kids in low-income households and high-crime neighborhoods. For example:

- Children of highly-educated parents are five times more likely to be reading in the hours after school than the children of the least-educated parents.⁴⁰
- Children of poorly-educated parents watch 60% more television than the children of well-educated parents.⁴¹ Much of this television viewing depicts murder and other violence—as well as sexual promiscuity—without any realistic portrayal of the agony crime leaves in its wake.

Children's television viewing has been associated with lower reading achievement, behavioral problems, and increased aggression. When children watch more than three hours a day of television or watch violent programs, the incidence of these behavioral and learning risks increases.⁴²

- Being unsupervised after school is substantially more likely to result in behavior problems for low-income children than for those from middle-income families.⁴³

3: Unmet Needs and Wasted Opportunities

Federal grants for after-school programs come primarily through the Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants program, created with the leadership of Senator Jim M. Jeffords (R-VT) to help schools work closely with community partners in meeting a broad range of needs. Since 1997, each of President Clinton's budgets has called for expanding after-school funding through the 21st Century program. With the public strongly favoring increased after-school funding, and substantial bipartisan support in Congress, \$40 million was appropriated for this purpose in 1998, \$250 million in 1999, \$450 million for 2000.

Despite this growth, the program remains so under funded that it can serve only 650,000 kids nationwide.

Last year, 2,252 communities sought assistance to establish or expand 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school programs, but the Department of Education had enough funding to provide only 310 grants.⁴⁴ Even among grantees, 40% report they still have waiting lists for children to get into the programs.⁴⁵

Some after-school child care is also supported through the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which provides vouchers to help low-income working families purchase child care for school age children and for children too young for school. But this program too is woefully under funded, and can serve only about one in ten of those eligible.

While states like California and Illinois have created significant new after-school programs since 1997, their investment in these programs continues to be modest. The Illinois Department of Human Services Teen REACH program provided \$17.8 million to fund 112 after-school programs serving 33,902 children age 6 to 17. California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership program is funded at \$87 million this year and serves an estimated 97,500 children.

Home Alone: Eleven Million Kids

More than seven school-age children in every ten are in households where both parents or the only parent are in the

'More than seven school-age children in every ten are in households where both parents or the only parent are in the workforce'

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workforce. In 69% of all married-couple families with children 6 to 17, both parents work outside the home. In 71% of single-mother families and 85% of single-father families with children 6 to 17, the custodial parent is working.⁴⁶

Those working families are faced with filling the gap between the parents' work schedules and the children's school schedules. That gap can often be 20 to 25 hours per week.

A September 2000 study from the Urban Institute estimates that four million children between 6 and 12 years old are home alone in the after-school hours.⁴⁷ While only 10% (1.2 million) of 6 to 9 year olds are home alone, fully 35% (nearly 2.9 million) of 10 to 12 year olds are home alone. That is only the tip of the iceberg. An additional four million 13 and 14 year olds are home alone or hanging out unsupervised⁴⁸, bringing the total to eight million. And while solid data is not available for teens over 14, it is clear that millions of high school youth also need constructive after-school activities.

The number of youngsters whose need for after-school programs goes unmet likely exceeds eleven million. Many more are in programs so starved for funding that they can't begin to provide the quality services that kids need.

Do teens over 14 really need after-school programs? The Quantum Opportunities program began when students were in high school. Leaving youths out of this program multiplied by six times the risk that they'd be convicted of a crime, and slashed their chances of finishing high school or going on to college.⁴⁹

High-school students don't need baby-sitting, but they do need constructive activities that put them in touch with caring adults, and help them gain valuable job skills, learn to get along with others, and experience the satisfaction of serving their communities.

Is the shortage of after-school programs restricted to urban areas? Not by a long shot. In rural areas, experts estimate that the availability of school-age care can cover only about one-third of the population of children with employed parents.⁵⁰

Moreover, the estimates above for kids who are unsupervised in the after-school hours are only the most obvious part of the picture of the unmet need for after-school programs.

Even parents who are home at the end of the school day may want the benefits of after-school programs for their children on one or more days each week.

Once children reach early adolescence, even the best parents may find that their influence wanes as their children seek autonomy and independence, and strive for the approval of peers.⁵¹ Ordering a teen to stay in the house after school may be a recipe for confrontation. One study of adolescents found that they spend an average of five minutes a day exclusively with their fathers, and about twenty minutes a day with their mothers.⁵² Meanwhile, insecurity and the need for peer approval and respect increase the likelihood that adolescents will take risks or respond with violence to insults or affronts.⁵³

Adults who work with kids in the after-school hours can't take the place of parents, but they can serve as valuable adult role models who bring special talents and energy to their work with children and teens.

Least Available Where Most Needed

After-school programs are least available where they would do most to prevent crime and help kids get a solid start.

With government support still so modest, research shows "the vast majority of after-school programs are funded through parent fees."⁵⁴ The annual cost of school-age child care programs open 3 to 4 hours a day all year ranges from about \$2,500 to about \$4,000.⁵⁵ As a consequence, the programs primarily serve children from middle income families and are located in middle-class communities.⁵⁶

Families of all incomes are challenged by the after-school hours. Many middle-income families scrape together funds to pay for after-school activities for their children and somehow manage to cobble together the necessary transportation arrangements to get children to and from these activities while the parents are working. Others are unable to do so.

But the families least likely to be able to access after-school programs are low- and moderate-income working families, especially those living in low-income neighborhoods⁵⁷. These are often the neighborhoods where crime is highest.

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**'The nation has a critical
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After-school programs are least available to the kids who would benefit most from them academically, emotionally and socially, and who without them are most at risk of physical harm, exposure to drugs and other negative influences, and ultimately of becoming involved in delinquency.

For low-income parents, "hoping for the best" may mean, regrettably, hoping that kids come home and watch television rather than hanging out with the drug dealers or gang members working hard to recruit them.

Even when these youngsters and their families manage to get into an after-school program, it is too often one which is underfunded, poorly-housed, and must make do with staff who are poorly-paid, poorly-trained, and too few in number to develop the close relationships between adults and youngsters which are at the heart of successful programs.

Robert Halpern, studying after-school programs in Chicago, observed: "Supervisors and group workers who have been at [these programs] for at least a few years have well-established relationships with some children, especially the 'regulars.' They know these children's families and school situations...They notice and intervene when a child's behavior seems different than usual....More commonly, though, even when there is institutional knowledge of a child, experienced staff members fail to communicate that knowledge to a new staff member currently responsible for that child. In part because group workers have so many children to attend to, children are most likely to get individual attention when they misbehave."⁵⁸

Because of low pay, turnover is frequently very high. In the programs Halpern was reviewing, 40% of the staff had been there less than one year.⁵⁹ Since it often takes children several months to develop a trusting relationship with an adult, this kind of turnover can be devastating to program success. No child should learn that adults disappear just as trusting, caring relationships have solidified.

In short, the nation has a critical shortage of after-school programs. Moreover, especially in low-income areas, the programs that are available are often too starved for funds to provide quality services that can be expected to produce quality results.

4: Quality Matters

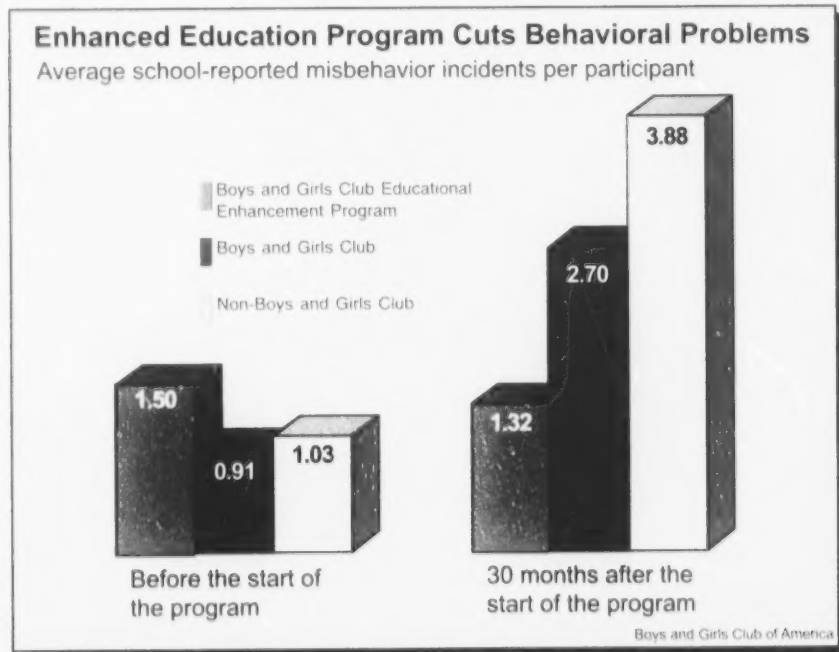
Will every after-school program achieve the dramatic reductions in crime and other positive results reported in some of the research? Of course not. Program design, implementation and staffing matter, and matter a lot. Some programs work far better than others.

Programs must be small enough to maintain a strong sense of community and intimacy. The ratio of adults to children and teens must be high enough that each youngster can develop a close bond with one of the program's adults. The adults must have the time to develop a personal relationship with each youngster.

A study of 37 participating after-school programs for first graders found that boys in programs with staff members with positive attitudes had significantly better behavior, according to their first-grade teachers, than those boys who attended programs with staff who displayed greater negativity. In other words, good, caring, trained staff matters.⁽⁶⁾

For example, researchers compared middle school students in Boys and Girls Clubs including an Educational Enhancement Program (EEP) component to participants in both other Boys and Girls Clubs and participants in a variety of other community after-school programs. Before the program started, those being enrolled in the EEP had 50% more behavior problems than those in the other two groups. But after 30 months of program operations, school data showed that those in the EEP had only half as many behavioral problem incidents as those in the other Boys and Girls Clubs, and

'Boys in programs with staff members with positive attitudes had significantly better behavior...than those boys who attended programs with staff who displayed greater negativity'



**'Programs won't produce
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one third as many behavioral incidents as those in the other community after-school programs. Those in the EEP also had better grades than boys and girls in either of the other groups.⁶¹

This research clearly argues against trying to do after-school programs on the cheap, stretching numbers served at the expense of quality.

It argues for evaluating program design, and providing adequate funds to attract, train, and retain good, caring program staff.

As after-school programs receive more funding, there will also be a need to provide financial support for training, accreditation and evaluation. We don't leave parents on their own to independently and individually evaluate the sanitary controls at the supermarket as they buy food for their families, and we shouldn't expect them individually to be able to fully inspect and evaluate each after-school program. The National School Age Care Alliance Standards for Quality School Age Care⁶² provide a useful guide for programs serving youngsters fourteen and younger.

Though some after-school programs should be more specialized than others, and children of different ages need different kinds of programs, every community needs a variety of programming. Programs won't produce the benefits we describe if they don't hold youngsters' interest. They can't begin to produce benefits unless they are sufficiently attractive so that families and young people choose to participate.

In general, young people should have out-of-school options that give them opportunities for active play, academic enrichment to develop both basic skills and higher-level thinking, exposure to arts, drama and music, and, especially for youngsters who are in middle school or high school, opportunities to begin serving their communities. For high school students, after-school options specifically aimed at career development and job skills training should also be available.⁶³

The dramatic success of the Quantum Opportunities program provides a standard against which to measure other programs. It also argues for offering scholarship incentives and possibly other modest financial incentives, at least in high-crime neighborhoods, to encourage program participation, and to provide

a realistic hope that hard work in school will lead to success in life.

As is the case with virtually every area of human service, from policing to education, investing in more research will help us learn to build on what we already know, and to make the most cost-effective use of each dollar in program expenditures. But we do now have models that work, and there is little excuse for failing to bring them to scale so they are available for all the children and families who need them.

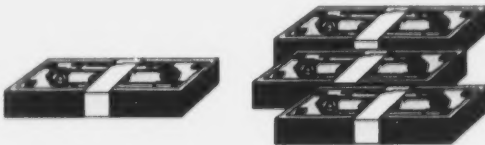
5: Investing in After-School Saves Money and Lives

Protecting the public safety is the fundamental obligation of government. It is not expected to be a financially self-supporting

operation. No one would suggest that we should have police preventing murders only if that activity produced enough savings to pay for itself. But even if that were the test, after-school programs would pass with flying colors.

Investments in after-school programs, especially for the children most at risk of sliding into delinquency or becoming victims of crime, do pay for themselves, not only in lives saved but even in tax dollars saved. For example:

After-School Programs are a Wise Investment



The Quantum Opportunities Program produces benefits to the public of over 3 dollars for every dollar spent on it, without even counting the savings from reductions in crime.

Taggart, Quantum Opportunities Program, 1994⁶⁴

Investments in after-school programs, especially for the children most at risk of sliding into delinquency or becoming victims of crime, do pay for themselves many times over, not only in lives but even in tax dollars.

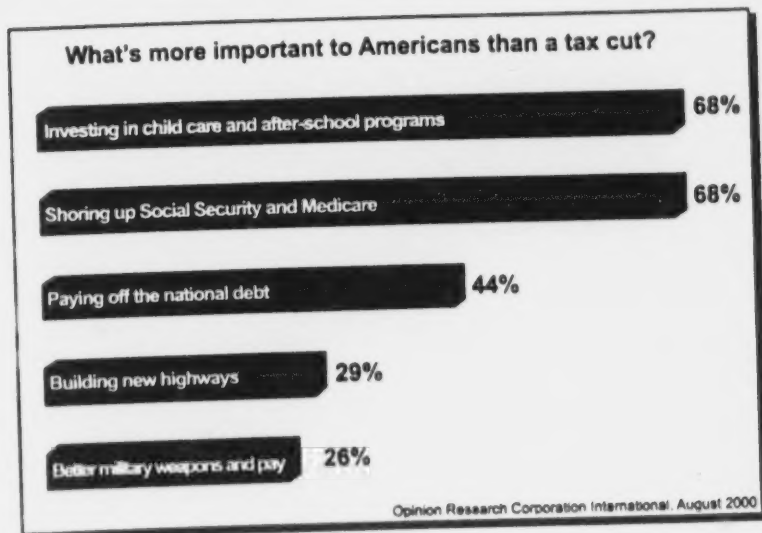
- The Quantum Opportunities after-school program produced benefits to recipients and the public of \$3.04 for every dollar spent without even accounting for the savings from a six-fold drop in crime by boys participating in the program.⁶⁴
- RAND Corporation researcher Peter Greenwood and his colleagues compared the cost-effectiveness of the Quantum Opportunities after-school program with that of California's Three Strikes law, which requires mandatory prison sentences for persons convicted of three serious crimes. They concluded that, per dollar spent, Quantum Opportunities was over 5 times more effective at preventing serious crimes than the Three Strikes law.⁶⁵ The extra income earned and taxes paid by youths who become responsible citizens instead of criminals, and the contributions they make to their communities, would produce enormous additional benefits not even counted in RAND's analysis.
- In the Canadian public housing project in which juvenile crime in the project dropped 75% over the 32 months the after-school program operated, the resulting savings to government agencies came to twice the program's cost.⁶⁶

- A 1997 study by Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimated that each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime could save the country between \$1.7 million and \$2.3 million.⁶⁷

No wonder polls conducted for Fight Crime: Invest in Kids show that 68% of Americans say expanding child care and after-school programs is a higher priority than a tax cut.⁶⁸

The fact of the matter is that federal and state treasuries will actually have more money in just a few years, whether for schools or tax cuts, highways or social security, if government invests now in expanding after-school programs.

The most important savings, of course, are priceless: thousands of families will be spared the agony that crime and violence leave in their wake.



6: From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call for Action

The people on the front lines fighting crime are less concerned with political ideology than with hard-nosed practical solutions. They insist on doing what really works to fight crime.

'We'll win the war against
crime when we're as
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and board in a prison cell'

Everyone agrees, of course, that dangerous criminals need to be locked up. But the people who work day in and day out to track down, arrest, and prosecute criminals know that the battle against crime can't be won solely with these back-end measures. It will be won when America is equally as ready to invest in front-end solutions that prevent crimes from ever happening in the first place.

Or, as Sheriff Patrick J. Sullivan Jr. (R-Arapahoe County, Colorado) put it, "We'll win the war against crime when we're as ready to guarantee a kid a place in an after-school program as we are to guarantee a felon room and board in a prison cell."

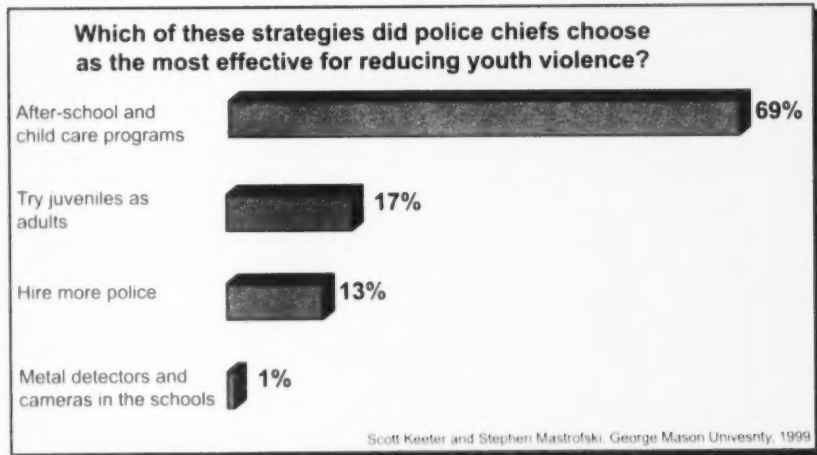
The one thousand police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and crime victims who comprise Fight Crime: Invest in Kids have called on all public officials to protect the public safety by providing all at-risk children and teens access to quality after-school programs. So have the 13,000 members of the National Sheriffs Association, the 290,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, the Major Cities (Police) Chiefs organization, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National District Attorneys Association, and law enforcement associations in Illinois, Iowa, Maine, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, Arizona and California.

The nation's largest organization of crime victims, the National Organization for Victim Assistance, has joined as well in the call for quality after-school programs.

Law Enforcement and the Public United

The depth of law enforcement commitment to front-end solutions to crime was shown in a national poll of police chiefs conducted by Professors Scott Keeter and Stephen Mastroski of George Mason University.

Eighty-six percent of the chiefs agreed that "expanding after-school and child care programs like Head Start will greatly reduce youth crime and violence." Nine out of ten of the chiefs agreed with the statement: "If America does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare and other costs."



The chiefs were asked to "guide elected officials" by picking "the most effective" strategy to reduce youth violence. They picked "providing more after-school programs and educational child care" by a four-to-one margin over such alternatives as prosecuting more juveniles as adults and hiring more police officers, and by a seventy-to-one margin over installing metal detectors and cameras in schools.

National public opinion polls conducted by Opinion Research Corporation International show the public agrees with the police. In an August 2000 poll, 86 percent of the public agreed that "America could greatly reduce violent crime by expanding preventive measures like after-school programs."

Our federal and state governments are falling far short of the investments in after-school programs needed to meet their responsibilities to protect the public safety. That shortfall is part of a gaping crime-prevention deficit that jeopardizes the safety of every American.

It is time the leaders at the state and federal levels lay out a plan to eliminate that deficit. No responsibility of federal and state governments is more fundamental than protecting the public safety.

That responsibility simply cannot be met without providing communities with the resources to assure that all families, especially those whose children are most at risk of going astray, have access to quality after-school programs.

'Our federal and state governments are falling far short of the investments in after-school programs needed to meet their responsibilities to protect the public safety'

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FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

What

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, founded in 1996, is a national, bipartisan, non-profit anti-crime organization.

Who

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is made up of over 1,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, heads of police organizations, experts in what works to reduce youth violence and victims of violence.

The organization's School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan has been endorsed by the Major Cities [Police] Chiefs organization, the Police Executive Research Forum, The National Sheriffs' Association, The National District Attorneys' Organization, The Fraternal Order of Police, the National Organization of Victim Assistance and state law enforcement organizations in Arizona, California, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island and Texas.

Resources available at www.fightcrime.org

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS' School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan. A four-point plan provides a roadmap for how public officials can dramatically reduce crime.

America's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy. A report showing that government could greatly reduce crime by investing in educational child care. Also available is a two-page summary of the report.

Smoking Reduction Impact of Early Childhood and After-School Programs Fact Sheet. A one-page fact sheet showing that after-school and early childhood programs also help to prevent smoking, teen pregnancy and drugs.

Crime-Prevention Impact of Investments in Children and Youth Groups and PowerPoint Presentation. A PowerPoint and/or transparency presentation of the evidence showing effective programs for children reduce crime.

National Poll of Police Chiefs. The poll shows law enforcement's overwhelming support for crime prevention programs such as: Head Start, educational child care and after-school programs.

Back-to-School public opinion poll. A poll showing that increased funding for educational child care and after-school programs tie with Social Security and Medicare as top priorities for the public.

Juvenile Crime public opinion poll. A poll showing that the public wants more prevention programs in the fight against juvenile crime.

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